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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KWMNKDEM](#) [KU](#)
SUBJECT: FREEDOM AGENDA: LIBERAL MP SAYS REDISTRICTING REQUIRED
FOR WOMEN TO BE ELECTED TO PARLIAMENT

REF: A) Kuwait 703

- B) Kuwait 656
- C) Kuwait 636
- D) Kuwait 601 and previous

¶1. During a March 7 seminar entitled "Electoral Constituencies and the Extent of their Effect on the Woman's Contribution in the Electoral Process," sponsored by the Kuwaiti Women's Social and Cultural Society, liberal Member of Parliament Ali Al-Rashed asserted that under the current distribution of the electoral constituencies, Kuwaiti women had no chance of being elected to the National Assembly. Complaining that it was easy to shift votes from one area to another and buy votes, and noting that smaller voting districts sustain the personal relationships between MPs and the services they provide to their constituents in exchange for political support, Al-Rashed argued, "It would be better if we cut the number of the constituencies down to five as political success in bigger constituencies would need electoral platforms." He maintained that reducing the number of electoral districts is the only means for women to be elected to national office. Rector of Arab Open University Dr. Moudhi Al-Humoud, echoed the MPs views and also called for the introduction of a party system.

¶2. Professor of Political Psychology at Kuwait University, Dr. Kamel Farraj, explained to the audience of 80, that the fair distribution of electoral constituencies is the one where no sect or segment of society benefits more than another, where no group would be deprived of its political rights, and where the well-being of the general public is given precedence over personal interests. He commented, "Among the loopholes of the current system is the emergence of the phenomenon of the service deputies (MPs elected solely for the services they provide their constituents), the aggravation of the phenomenon of changing residential addresses, and the consolidation of the phenomenon of conducting primary elections among sects and tribe members." He stated that combating such drawbacks necessitates devising a system where constituencies become less in number and bigger in size. He noted, "The electoral constituencies play a key role in the process of elections, in the selection of candidates, and in giving women a better launch pad."

¶3. Comment: The National Assembly has set April 17 as the date for discussing distribution of electoral constituencies (ref C). While there is growing consensus on the need to reduce the districts from the current 25, debate continues on whether there should be 10 or 5 districts and whether their boundaries should be based on population, geography, or demographics. There is also consensus on redistricting being the key to the full political participation of Kuwaiti women in the 2007 parliamentary elections. The success of the redistricting remains uncertain, nonetheless, the attention given to the matter and its impact on women's political participation bodes well for political reform in general. End comment.

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